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LETTER DATED 17 JULY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

[Original: English]

Statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, issued in Tbilisi on 16 July 1998

On 15 July 1998, as a result of the explosion of a cart going from the village of Sida to Zugdidi, eight peace-abiding persons were killed and three were seriously wounded.

The Abkhaz separatist authorities, backed by a number of leaders of the collective Peacekeeping Forces, are carrying out an anti-Georgian campaign, aimed at convincing the public that the above-mentioned and earlier incidents have been carried out by the Georgian side.

Expressing its regret in connection with the above, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia is entitled to state the following.

After the execution of the punitive operations in the Gali region in May, the Abkhaz side started mining the roads and paths to Zugdidi, with the aim of preventing the uncontrollable movement of the refugees, letting them pass only at checkpoints after receiving appropriate fees. The above is corroborated by the explosion of the United Nations patrol car in the same zone at the beginning of June.

With cognizance of the above, the Georgian side has full grounds to declare that the full responsibility for the deaths of eight persons near Sida lies with the Abkhaz separatist regime, being a direct result of its policy of ethnic cleansing, robbery and violence.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals again to the Abkhaz side to make constructive steps, through joint efforts, to ease the abnormal situation created in the Gali region and at least minimally ensure the security of the peace-abiding population.